

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, FONSI AND DECISION RECORD

**BLM, Bishop Field Office  
351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100  
Bishop, CA 93514**

**EA Number:** CA-170-05-01

**Lease/Serial/Case File No.:** CACA 46217

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Conway Ranch Bypass Pipeline

**Location of Proposed Action:** MDM, T. 2 N., R. 26 E., Section 7, NW1/4NW1/4.

**Applicant (if any):** Mono County Economic Development

**Plan Conformance:** The proposed action is subject to the Bishop Resource Management Plan, approved March 25 1993. The proposed action has been reviewed and is in conformance with the plan.

**Need for Proposed Action:** In 2000, The County of Mono and the BLM purchased portions of the Conway Ranch for wildlife, riparian, and songbird bird habitat, as well as, cultural resources. Portions of the property were purchased by the County for a fish rearing farm. The fish operation is supported by water from the Wilson Creek diversion ditch and is only operational during the summer months. Water in the ditch normally freezes during the winter drastically reducing flow in the ditch and curtails fish rearing during the winter. The County wants to operate the fish rearing year-round. In order to allow the operation to develop fish during winter months, a bypass pipeline has been proposed so that water which would flow in the ditch to the fish operation would be put into a pipeline to keep it from freezing as it normally does in the ditch. This would supply water to the fish operation during the winter months.

### **Description of Proposed Action:**

The proposed action would be the issuance of a 30-year (renewable) ROW to Mono County for a 15 inch buried pipeline. The pipeline would begin at the Pole Line dirt road drop structure located in the Wilson Creek diversion ditch (See Map point A). At the drop structure, a temporary wood intake structure would be built within the ditch and at the up-stream side of the drop structure. This intake would be connected to a 15" diameter buried pipeline. The pipeline would continue northeast for 520 feet to the southern boundary fence of the Conway Ranch property owned by the County. Prior to trench excavation, the brush, grasses and topsoil would be bladed from a 6 foot wide area along the pipeline route and stockpiled along the route. The topsoil would be replaced, and the uprooted shrubs and grass cover would be scattered over the disturbed area after pipeline placement.

The trench for the pipeline would be 4 feet deep and 3 feet wide and excavated by backhoe. All excavated dirt would be returned to the trench after pipe placement. The backhoe would be cleaned prior to use on the public land to reduce exotic weed dispersal and would be the only equipment using cross country travel. The proposed action would take place on October 12 and continue until the beginning of November.

### **Environmental Impacts:**

The proposed action is not within a Wilderness, Wilderness Study Area, Area of Critical Environmental Concern, nor Wild and Scenic River corridor, and there would be no effects on any lands so designated.

Air quality would not be affected. The proposed action is within the Mono Basin federal nonattainment area. The action would not result in the emission of PM<sub>10</sub>.

There would be no impact to listed or sensitive species. There are no known listed or sensitive species or habitats within the proposed action area.

There would be no impacts to prime farm lands, flood plains, nor water quality (including ground or surface waters).

There would be no disproportionate impacts to low income or minority groups, per Executive Order 12898 (2/11/94).

### ***Cultural resources***

A cultural inventory was completed for the proposed project. No cultural resources were found. No impact to this resource is expected. Standard cultural stipulations would be used during construction.

### ***Visual resources***

The area has a VRM Class III rating which states that the proposed action may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer, and changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

The proposed action area is below the grade of Hwy 167 (Pole Line) and Hwy 395 which are the key observation points. The existing shrubs surrounding the pipeline route would screen the disturbed area from both of these highways. The disturbance would be slightly visible from the roadside viewing point located halfway up the Hwy 395 Conway grade. This viewpoint is 2 miles from the pipeline route and the pipeline route is oriented at an angle in relation to the viewpoint. The existing shrubs surrounding the pipeline route, the scattering of uprooted shrubs over the disturbed area, the 2 mile distance from the viewpoint, and the angle of the pipeline route would highly reduce the visibility of the disturbance from the overlook. The proposed action would not dominate

the landscape or attract attention. The proposed action would meet VRM Class III standards.

Based on good soils and 12 inches of rainfall, natural re-vegetation would begin in the spring with numerous shrub and grass seedlings being established by the end of summer of 2005.

### ***Vegetation***

The vegetation, covering 80% of the pipeline route, consists of sagebrush, rubber rabbitbrush, and giant wild rye. The remaining area is a shrubby dry meadow comprised of wiregrass, salt grass, and Douglas carex with rubber rabbitbrush. It is expected that 40 shrubs would be uprooted during construction and 600 sq ft of dry meadow vegetation would be lost.

Based on good soils and 12 inches of rainfall, natural re-vegetation would begin in the spring of 2005 with numerous shrub and grass seedlings being established by the end of summer. The scattering of uprooted shrubs and the return of topsoil with associated seeds would also help in re-establishment of both the shrub and dry meadow areas.

### ***Invasive, Non-native Species***

There are no invasive, non-native species existing in the proposed action area at this time. The backhoe would be cleaned prior to entry on public land, and there would be no cross country travel by other equipment or vehicles. It is expected that the disturbed area would begin natural re-vegetation in the spring of 2005. There should be no invasive species established due to lack of invasive species seed source and competition from re-established native species.

### ***Wildlife Habitat***

The proposed action area is within the Mono Lake deer migration corridor and holding area. Migration begins generally after a major snow fall in the Sierra's which typically happens the first week of November. The proposed action would be completed prior to this time. It is not expected that temporarily losing 3100 sq ft of vegetation would impact deer habitat in the area. It is not expected that deer migration would be affected because the proposed action is outside of the migration time period.

The proposed action area does provide habitat for small mammals and song birds. It is expected that, during construction, various small mammals and song birds would be temporarily displaced.

### ***Minerals***

There are no mining claims or mineral sales or geothermal sales in the proposed action area. No impact to mineral resources is expected.

## ***Economic Impacts***

### **Viability of the Proposed Development**

The proposed action is considered highly viable and a necessity for expanding the fish rearing operation to a year-round basis. The pipeline would provide flowing water to the operation and can be easily installed. The County has the water rights for the water and holds a ROW for the diversion ditch.

### **Impacts to the Community and to the Tribe**

The fish rearing operation provides mature trout for actual purchase for private fish ponds and/or as a source of fish for planting in Mono County streams. The fish planting is considered an economic development aspect for the County by improving or enhancing the fishing experience within the County. There would be a slight economic impact to the County and the fish rearing operation resulting from increased sales in the spring and the increased fishing potential due to expanding the fish rearing to a year-round activity.

There would be no impact to the Tribes.

### **Benefits of Being a Non-Gaming Tribe**

No impact to non-gaming Tribes.

## ***Environmental Justice***

There is no impact to environmental justice. There are no minority or special interest groups affected by the proposed action.

## ***Hazardous Materials***

No impact.

## ***Gaming***

No impact.

## ***Consistency with County Planning***

The proposed action is by the County. No impact.

## ***Impacts to County Infrastructure***

No impact.

### ***Impacts to Local Community***

See economic impact section.

### ***Adherence to Local, State and Federal Environmental Ordinances / Laws***

The proposed action is in compliance with local, state, and federal ordinances and laws.

### ***Discussion of Trust Status, Federal Trust Responsibilities, Tribal Sovereignty***

There is no trust status or Tribal issues involved.

### ***Land Uses / Realty / Rights-of-way***

The proposed action would be the issuance of a 30-year ROW to the County. The County is a qualified applicant and holder.

### ***Cumulative effects***

This project is not expected to contribute to cumulative effects, because of the limited time frame for the construction and the loss of 3100 sq ft of vegetation would quickly re-vegetate within a year.

### **Description of Mitigation Measures and Residual Impacts:**

Standard cultural ROW stipulations. There would be no residual impact other than the natural re-vegetation of the area within one year.

### **Implementation Monitoring:**

None required.

### **Effectiveness Monitoring:**

None required.

### **Persons/Agencies Consulted:**

Dan Lyster Mono Co. Economic Development Dept.

### **Preparer(s):**

Larry Primosch BLM, Realty Specialist

Terry Russi BLM, Supervisory Wildlife Specialist

**Date:** October 8, 2004

**Reviewed By:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Environmental Coordinator

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## **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT/DECISION RECORD**

I have reviewed this environmental assessment including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts. I have determined that the proposed action with the mitigation measures described below will not have any significant impacts on the human environment and that an EIS is not required.

There will be no effect on threatened or endangered species as a result of the action.

I have determined that the proposed project is in conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan, which was approved March 25, 1993. This plan has been reviewed, and the proposed action conforms with the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

It is my decision to implement the project as described in the proposed action and issue a 30-year right-of-way (ROW) to the Mono County Economic Development Department for the installation of a buried 15" water pipeline. The pipeline would be installed as per the ROW application and the proposed action in this environmental assessment.

It is in the public interest to allow the County to install the pipeline thereby allowing water to flow to the fish rearing operation during the winter months and expand the operation to a year-round activity. The year-round operation would allow for increased fish production. This would enhance the County's ability to stock large trout in Mono County streams thereby improving the fishing experience for fishermen using the streams and lakes in Mono County.

### **Mitigation Measures/Remarks:**

Standard cultural stipulations.

**Authorized Official:** \_\_\_\_\_/s/ Bill Dunkelberger\_\_\_\_\_  
Field Manager, Bishop Field Office

**Date:** \_\_\_\_October 12, 2004\_\_\_\_\_